



November 19, 2003**OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK250-4-5****SUBJECT: FNM – Use of Government Vehicle**

Purpose: To provide guidance on use of government owned vehicle.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2004

Government vehicles are provided to NRCS employees to assist in carrying out official duties as government employees. Official duties or purpose include those functions that further the mission of NRCS. Official business is to be determined by the State Conservationist.

Current NRCS policy states that spouses or family members may not ride in a government vehicle while it is being used for official business by an employee. Exceptions would include a family member who is officially signed up and acting in an Earth Team Volunteer capacity. Earth Team Volunteers are considered Federal personnel. Non-Federal individuals should not be transported in U.S. government vehicles unless for official purposes **and** prior written approval has been obtained from the State Conservationist. Transporting of producers around their operations in a government vehicle while conducting official business does not require written approval. Transporting conservation district employees and directors in a government vehicle while conducting official business does not require written approval.

Personal items not related to carrying out of the employee's official duties should not be transported in a Government vehicle. Employees should not use government vehicles to conduct personal business or to run personal errands.

Government vehicles are not to be used for transporting employees between their residence and their official duty station, except in cases of employees engaged in field work, the nature of whose duties make such transportation necessary, and then only when authorized in accordance with Department Regulation 5400-5.

The Department Regulation covers situations where employee's work requires the employee's presence at various locations (4) (d). The policy states, in part, "The field work exception may not be used (1) when the employee's workday begins at his or her official Government duty station, or (2) when the employee normally commutes to a fixed location no matter how far removed from his or her official duty station." Requests for home to work authorization must be completed utilizing Form AD-728. Only the State Conservationist has delegated authority to approve occasional home to work use of a Government-owned vehicle. The following examples are provided to clarify official use of Government vehicles.

Example 1: An employee lives in Conservation City, and their official duty station is Red River. The employee provides assistance to the Conservation City Conservation District one day a week and would like to park the government vehicle at the Conservation City Conservation District Office and use it to commute to Red River. This is not permissible because Red River is the official duty station.

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Example 2: An employee lives in Conservation City, and their official duty station is Red River. The employee provides assistance to the Conservation City Conservation District four days a week, reporting to the conservation district to start the work day, and desires to have the government vehicle parked at the Conservation City Conservation District Office. This is permissible if the written request is made through supervisory channels to the State Conservationist. The employee would be required to drive their privately owned vehicle to the official duty station on the morning they work at the official duty station, and would be expected to report to the official duty station at the start of their official tour of duty.

Example 3: A Technical Service Office employee lives a great distance from their official duty station. The employee is temporarily assigned to an EWP project that is closer to his/her residence than to the official duty station. The employee would have to drive the long distance to the duty station, pick up the government vehicle and drive back towards or beyond his/her residence to perform his/her job and due to the nature of the employee's job he/she can report directly to the temporary duty location to begin the tour of duty. In these situations, if practical, Government vehicles may be temporarily based at a Government facility located near the employee's temporary job site or at the employee's home. Employees that fall in this category should complete an AD-728 through supervisory channels with final approval by the State Conservationist. This approval will be for a period no longer than six months.

Government vehicles are to be parked overnight at the employee's official duty station, unless the employee is in official travel status, or has received specific approval for temporary storage or basing of the vehicle from the State Conservationist. Exceptions to this policy will be rare and must demonstrate a true benefit to the agency.

All requests shall be made through supervisory channels for alternative vehicle basing. Form AD-728 will be used for temporary or occasional storage of a vehicle at a location other than the employee's official duty station. Form AD-728 is for a specific time period not to exceed six months. Written requests can be made for longer term (i.e. more than 6months) basing of vehicles at locations other than employee's official duty station.

While in official travel status, employee may use a government vehicle for official purposes, which include transportation:

- a) Between places of official business,
- b) Between places of official business and temporary lodging when public transportation is unavailable or its use is impractical, or
- c) Between places of official business or temporary lodging and restaurants, drugstores, barber shops, places of worship, cleaning establishments, and similar places necessary for sustenance, comfort, or health of the employee to foster the continued efficient performance of Government business.

Employees shall exercise discretion to avoid, whenever possible, any situation which may tend to convey an impression to the public that the Government vehicle is being used for anything other than official purposes.

/s/ - (Randy Freeland – Acting)

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State Conservationist